

A LETTER FROM FIRENZE'S SISTER CITY FLORENCE, ALABAMA

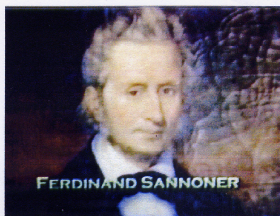
The town of Florence, Alabama, was established in 1818 through two land auctions (one in March and one in July) overseen by the owners of the 5,500 acres of undeveloped property, the Cypress Land Company.

This company of stockholders hired a 23-year-old surveyor/engineer from Tuscany by the name of Ferdinand Sannoner to work with General John Coffee to design the layout of our beautiful city on the banks of the Tennessee River - as Firenze lies next to the Arno. (Between 1818 and 1852, Signor Sannoner's original map of Florence became so frayed that the city leaders paid him 25 US dollars to draft a new one. The 1852 map that he drew is still in existence, but the 1818 map is not.

You will see evidence of his European background such as: one entire city block designated a "Public Walk" (today's Wilson Park); a street named "Market" extending outside the city to accommodate farmers bringing their produce into town; a thoroughfare on the perimeter labeled "Circular Road" designed to keep down traffic congestion in the heart of the city.

Signor Sannoner's home was located on the southeast corner of Market and Tuscaloosa Streets, across the street from "Public Walk". Today a handsome library for our town, built in 2002 at a cost of 7,000,000 US dollars sits on his home site. Inside is the library, there is a marble medallion in the floor, ten feet in diameter. Its design an acknowledgement city kinship with Firenze. On its border are the words "Ex libris Florentinis", inside the circle are three giglios, Firenze's official symbol. The marble for these giglios is from Tuscany and has flecks of gold in it.

There is not a museum in Florence dedicated to Signor Sannoner, however, an original oil portrait of him hangs in Pope's Tavern, one of our museums whose building dates to 1840. Although there is not an annual parade to commemorate the founding of our city, there is an authentic Renaissance Feast held on the evening of the third Saturday each October, with seating limited to 200 fortunate diners. The next weekend, the fourth Saturday and Sunday in October, the official Alabama Renaissance Faire is held in Wilson Park in downtown Florence. Admission



Ferdinand Sannoner, survey / engineer from Tuscany

is free and thousands of people attend to enjoy entertainment, food and crafts reminiscent of the historical Renaissance. A large percentage of those in attendance wear elaborate costumes of the era as well. It's great weekend in Florence, Alabama.

In conjunction with the Feast and the Faire, we have lectures, as well as musical and dramatic events throughout October (which we refer to as Renaissance Month). In fact, our city now refers to its self in its promotional publications as the "Renaissance City."

Our oral tradition is that Signor Ferdinand Sannoner was allowed by General John Coffee and other stockholders of the Cypress Land Company to name our town as a reward for his excellent work. He chose Florence since, also according to our tradition, FIRENZE was his favorite town in Tuscany.



Florence, Alabama - Frank Lloyd Wright Rosenbaum House